critical digest

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This Week in NYC

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts acquired a new president and a new plan to start construction of the 1400 seat Repertory Theatre in Oct without waiting for NYC to vote the needed funds. William Schuman, composer and president of Julliard School of Music, has been elected president, succeeding Gen Maxwell Taylor who resigned in Jul to become military adviser to President Kennedy. Funds for construction of the repertory theatre will be borrowed from other units of the Center and will be repaid when the NYC Board of Estimate and City Council vote the $15 million required.

Plays

All the Way Home posted fifth and final closing notice Sept 16 after 334 performances... Fiorello! to move Oct 31 to Alvin... Let It Ride postponed NY debut from Oct 6 to Oct 12, Ronny Graham aiding with rewrites in Philadelphia... The Last of the Wine, Garson Kanin's adaptation of Lael Tucker Wertenbacher's novel "Death of a Man" to star Henry Fonda in Feb, Kanin director... A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum a new musical comedy by Burt Shevelove, Larry Gelbert, Stephen Sondheim to be presented May 3 at Alvin by Hal Prince. Milton Berle may star, George Abbott to direct. ... Mamba's Daughters opera version commissioned by NYC City Opera Co, music by Ned Rorem, book by Arnold Weinstein.

Players

Marty May replaced Howard da Silva, Fiorello!, who is directing Purlie Victorious ... Jean Fenn's role dropped from Sail Away, star reportedly paid eight week's salary... Torin Thatcher and Denholm Elliott to co-star in Write Me a Murder... Elizabeth Howell to replace Patricia Neway, Sound of Music, Oct 7... Maud Scheerer, 80, died of heart attack in NYC.

NYC Calendar

Happy Days- Cherry Lane- (38 Commerce St) 9/17. Theatre 1961 (Richard Barr- Clinton Wilder) present new two character Samuel Beckett play with Ruth White, John Beecher, staged by Alan Schneider. To alternate with Albee twin bill American Dream and The Death of Bessie Smith.

One Way Pendulum- East 74 (334 E 74) 9/18. Phoenix Theatre & Caroline Burke Swann present new British comedy by N. F. Simpson, directed by Douglas Seale with Gerald Hiken, Betty Leighton.

Rhinoceros- Longacre 9/18. Leo Kerz production of Ionesco's play re-opens for two week run prior to national tour with Zero Mostel, Alfred Ryder. Postponed from 9/11 due to Mostel's illness.

Electra- City Center 9/19 Greek Tragedy Theatre Pirakon Teatron of Athens presents Sophocles drama in Greek directed by Dimitri Rondiris, starring Aspassia Papathanassious. Simultaneous transistor translations available.

Opening of a Window - Theatre Marquee (110 E 59)-9/20 Jerome Guardino-Bram Appel present new play by Gene Radano, a NYC patrolman, directed by Fran Malis.

Ghosts-4th St (83 E 4) 9/21 David Ross presents and directs revival of Ibsen drama, Carmel Ross' adaptation of R. Farquaharson Sharp translation with Leueen MacGrath, Staats Cotsworth, Carrie Nye. Joseph Marino replaced Michael Wager last week.

Playhouses

Hudson Theatre, W 44, sold by NBC to an undisclosed buyer for $1,100,000 who plans to demolish it and replace it with a garage.

Broadway Business

Variety reports general drop in all shows with only Carnival a sell-out.

Off Broadway

King of the Dark Chamber closed after 255 performances ... Liza Stuart, The Fantasticks, doubling at No 1 Fifth Ave. Kenneth Nelson moved to The Sap of Life, with Jack Blackton replacing him in the long-run musical... Jane Romano returned to Red Eye of Love after summer tour in On the Town, with her replacement Frances Sternhagen moving to Misalliance.

Go Show Me A Dragon a new comedy-drama about West Coast beatniks by Gene Feldman to be presented Oct 16 at Midway, directed by John Ben Tarver... Genouisia, a new avant-garde comedy by French poet Rene de Obaldia, adapted by Gertrude Corey to be presented in Dec by Liska March-John Corrington... Brecht's Man Is Man to be presented this season by Living Theatre.

Off Broadway dispute between Actors Equity and League of Off Broadway Theatres and Producers looms. Equity demanded immediate payment of $45 per week rehearsal salary pending new contract, producers have refused. $20 per week for four weeks was the rehearsal fee in the old contract.

Legal Dept

Treasurers & Ticket Sellers Union won $10 per week increase in new League of NY Theatres contract, for a $140 per week minimum.

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

Play of the Week revival series starts Sept 23 on WNTA-TV (NYC) with The Grand Tour. Each two hour tape to be shown twice weekly, Sat at 10 PM, Sun at 3 PM ... Midwest Theatre Conference, Univ of Chicago, seminars being broadcast on WBAI-FM (NYC)... Around NYC Today, WNYC(NYC) to feature opening night reviews at 7 AM and 8 AM by Maxine Keith.

Vaudeville

RKO Palace to present one week of continious vaudeville Sept 22 with Ray Charles, Sarah Vaughan.

DIGESTS OF CURRENT NYC THEATRE REVIEWS

I Want You- Maidman (416 W 42) 9/14. 1 pro-News- and 6 con- filed on new musical satire of World War I song publishing with book by Stefan Kanter-Jess Korman, music and lyrics by Joseph Crayton, Kanfer, Korman, presented by Ted Flicker-Sam Felfman-Crayhon, directed by Flicker with Joshua Shelley, Barbara Quaney, Al Mancini. Single affirmative voter, Davis, News, enjoyed high-spirited and laughably insane evening presented by 22 persons, all nuts. The outrageously silly book was just slight enough not to get in the way of songs and lyrics, with a likeable cast and imaginative staging. But negative voters could not agree, most panning material, some the cast. Two approved of air-conditioning in comfortable playhouse, two noted that attempts at satire made original World War I songs seem better in comparison. Taubman, Times, panned it as unfunny, uninspired, unquiet, with authors and performed treating the story line as an afterthought. Times aisle-sitter noted that free copy of sheet music inserted in program was about the only gift of the evening. Kerr, Herald Tribune, marked it just bad, a sodden series of leaping shenanigans performed by a company which seems somehow not to have shaved and featuring unfunny jokes. Kerr fears that the plight of Shelley is unthinkable, the show doing every thing conceivable to insure his future unemployment. Coleman, Mirror, did not like the show with its primitive libretto, sophomoric dialogue in which the satire eluded him. Watts, Post, feared it was beyond help with the book chiefly blamed. Watts praised Quaney's fresh prettiness, sense of humor, singing voice for coming closest to making the evening bearable. O'Connor, Journal American, felt that what might have looked like a good idea on paper came out as a rather amateurish performance Off Broadway at Broadway prices. It lacked genuine talent, class, meaning style and superior quality, Journal American drama editor concluded. Hudson, World Telegram & Sun, wonders how the enterprise could take place without a single good joke. Tasteless stale sight gags, double-takes, predictable retorts are not satire, he points out.

The Cockeyed Kite- Actors Playhouse (100-7th Av-S.)- 9/13. 1 pro- News- and 6 con- filed on new play about a doomed teen-ager by Joseph Caldwell, presented by William Nichols-Van Varner, directed by Neil McKenzie with Jerry Pagano, Alfred Hinckley, Audra Lindley, Peggy Pope. Solo pro voter, Davis, News, was a mild supporter of the meandering, sometimes touching and often funny story, well mounted and excellently acted, with sensitive direction. Dissenting majority also praised cast, but felt first play by author missed in the telling of its touching story. Taubman, Times, found several amusing lines and an occasional flash of character, though the main character's torments would float with happy anguish in TV soap opera. Kerr, Herald Tribune, suggested author could learn by close study of what some generally perceptive actors have been able to make of his script, otherwise it is a slow, evasive evening. Coleman, Mirror, was seldom moved by the touching story which was on the skimpy side on its writing, with too little cumulative effect. Watts, Post, thought play had pathos, but was short on dramatic expertness, never a disaster but its dramatic power is unfortunately restrict. O'Connor, Journal American, panned it harshly as a slight, theatrical contrivance, not a play but a monotonous monologue with players doing the best they could. Hudson, World Telegram & Sun, marked it an honorable failure by its new author, his kind of idealism gives the theatre meaning. Diffuse, climactic serious scenes resemble a promising photograph slightly out of focus, with low keyed humor left to carry the play.

OFF BROADWAY WEEK

Krapp's Last Tape-and The Zoo Story East End-(85 E 4th St) 9/12. 1 pro- Herridge, Post-filed on revival of twin bill of Samuel Beckett and Edward Albee short plays, directed by Alan Schneider presented for limited engagement by Theatre 1961 (Richard Barr- Clinton Wilder) with Donald Davis as solo performer in the first, and William Daniels and Ben Piazza in the second. Post drama editor discovered that both plays have taken on new shadings and sureness since their original presentation. If once they seemed to wander uneventfully they now throb continually with meaning.

Lorca and Three New Playwrights- Key (4 St Marks) 9/8. 1 con- Hudson, World Telegram & Sun- filed on four short plays presented by Gerson Gurrell. Total was a gloomy evening. New plays were One Blue Candle by Charles Creasap, Breakfast by Edward Evans, Strings of Fame by George Christopoulos, plus Lorca's The Virgin, the Sailor and and the Student. New scripts compared to Lorca work came apart from inexperience, pretention and unoriginality.

The Mime and Me-1961- Provincetown (125 MacDougal) 9/12. 1 pro- Hudson, WTS, on special Mon 9 PM and Fri 11 30 PM presentation of mime Lionel Shepard, Sykes and Jimmy Gavin. The production is entertaining, but it isn't mime.

The Music Man-Westbury, NY- 9/9. Coleman, Mirror, filed a rave notice for the Westbury Music Fair revival of the Meredith Willson musical. Swell cast headed by Larry Douglas, Barbara Williams, James Harwood in production admirably suited to theatre-in-the-round.

NYC FUTURE CALENDAR

Misalliance- Sher Sq- 9/25...From the Second City-Royale- 9/26...Greek Tragedy Theatre-Twin Bill- City Center 9/26...Thracian Horses-Orpheum- 9/27...Hi Paisano-York 9/27...4th Ave North- Mad Av 9/27...Purlie Victorious-Cort 9/28...Harlot's House- 9/29... Corn Is Greek-Masters 9/30.

Sap of Life- 1 Sher Sq- 10/2...Do You Know the Milky Way- Barrymore 10/2...Sail Away- Broadhurst -10/3 ...Between Whiskey & Vodka-Bar Pl 10/3...The Caretaker-Lyceum 10/4 ...Blood Sweat and Stanley Poole- Morosco 10/5...High Fidelity- Ambassador 10/9...Saroyan Twin-Bill- 10/9...Milk & Honey- Beck- 10/10...Everybody Loves Opal-Longacre 10/11...Let It Ride- O Neill 10/12... How to Succeed- 46th St 10/14...Another Evening with Harry Stoones- Gram Arts 10/16 ...All in Love- 41st St 10/16... Go Show Me A Dragon- Midway-10/16...Diff'rent- Mermaid-10/17...A Shot in the Dark- Booth 10/18...A Cook for Mr. General- Playhouse 10/19...O Marry Me- Gate- 10/20 ... Anthony on Overtime- Blackfriars- 10/20...Kwamina -54th -10/23...Yves Montand- Golden 10/24...Look Weve Come Through- Hudson 10/25/ ..Write Me A Murder- Belasco-10/26...The Buskers- Cricket-10/28...Go Fight City Hall-Mayfair 10/30...Garden of Sweets- ANTA 10/31... The Apple- Living 10/?...Time Gentleman, Please, Strollers-10/?

Complaisant Lover- Barrymore- 11/1... Kean - Broadway- 11/2...Gideon- Plymouth- 11/9...Shadows of Heroes- York- 11/14...Gay Life- 11/18...Sunday in NY-Cort 11/20...Man for All Seasons- ANTA- 11/22.

GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

SCHUMAN SELECTION... William Schuman's selection as president of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts hailed by Times and Herald Tribune editorials . Former saluted it as a rare case in this country of a creative artist being chosen to fill a key adminstrative post. Now Lincoln Center will benefit from the talents of someone who understands the problems of both artist and adminstrator, Times concludes. Herald Tribune cheered welcome move for Schuman will have the support and good wishes of all persons who wish to see Lincoln Center develop into a seedbed of cultural activity as well as a cluster of handsome buildings.

COLUMN TIPS... Sail Away cast not surprised Jean Fenn role was eliminated as she wanted her role built up, hears Kilgallen, Journal American... Average cast gets 250 telegrams at opening of a straight play and 1000 at a musical, adds Rice, Herald Tribune... 8326 applications recorded for opening night of Sail Away, notes Lyons, Post.

HOW DEEP THE HOLE... Talk about theatre problems seems to have produced a new, menacing problem, a whole new series of Withdrawal Symptoms, surmises Kerr, Herald Tribune. A hint of frightened retreat crops up in public and private conversations. Critic will consider these in detail in future Sun. columns. But he asks before anyone makes a strategic retreat into a happily- hidden hole, ready to pull down the blind that conceals the entrance ; to ask himself how deep the hole, whether there are other exits, how long he can hold out there, and whether or not there is light enough.

BARD CURTAIN CALLS... Hearty applause for all concerned with Joe Papp's NY Shakespeare Festival urged by Post editorial... Shouldn't the Stratford, Conn, institution face up to the fact that the quality of its work is anything but impressive, asks Taubman, Times . Whatever its' successes at the box-office, it has not distinguished itself as an unfaltering imaginative interpreter of Shakespeare... Joe Papp explains in a Post letter that his introduction to NYC Mayor Wagner at the opening of Richard II was not political.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Six hits from the forthcoming season's 60 expected Broadway shows predicted by McClain, Journal American... Tyrone Guthrie was warned by Watts, Post, to move warily if he gets around to directing Iolanthe , the loveliest of the Savoy classics. Any excess tampering would be sacrilege.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Herald Tribune reader who enjoyed the Stratford, Conn, productions this season complains that she is getting pretty tired of the inverted snobbery of critics like Crist, Herald Tribune Arts Editor, who think that just because something is free it has to be good.

LOVE THOSE CRITICS... What the people of the theatre cherish and clutch to their hearts with rapt affection is not a notice brimming over with loving kindness, but one filled with bright malicious humor, gaily invective and devasting scorn, explains Watts, Post. That is , of course, that it is provided with wit and scorn not directed at their own work.

PROS & CONS BY TMK

The Pirates of Penzance is a thoroughly entertaining Chapter Two in the modern musical theatre history being rewritten by Tyrone Guthrie. Though students of Gilbert & Sullivan may be upset at the instant burial of the standard , dated business, they never will be missed. Without changing the period or too many of the costumes, the Stratford, Ont, troupe brings a modern reality to the witty lines, and a fine chorus and superb orchestra bring the music quietly alive. Finally the casting of actors who can sing, rather than singers who can't act, is a pleasant change for New Yorkers.

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The Cockeyed Kite is the first new play of the season and a fine example of the half-finished script. It contains several excellent characterizations in the minor roles, but the major characters are so emerged in outlandish details of small town life that they may drown onstage. The two youngest cast members, William J Sweeney IV and Richard Moylan, present human, realistic characters inspite of a sometimes humorous, often cliche-filled script. Effective sliding sets by Lloyd Burlingame are outstanding.

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Lincoln Center took two giant steps this week. The start of construction of the Repertory Theatre prior to the NYC Mayoralty election is a realistic approach to a political nightmare. The appointment of composer-educator William Schuman is an inspired choice. The editorial criticism leveled at the Board of Lincoln Center for choosing Gen. Maxwell Taylor have evidentally been evaluated as correct. As Lincoln Center promises to be a guide to the adminstration of 25 predicted performing arts centers in the next decade, the selection of an artist-adminstrator is doubly important.

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Dr. Schuman's letter of resignation to the Julliard School faculty gives an idea of the dimensions of the man 's mind and what can be expected at Lincoln Center: "I believe that the center can provide leadership in bringing large numbers of Americans to a new interest in music, drama and the dance, and in giving them new opportunities to enjoy the experience in the arts. I believe it can lead the way in the development of new 20th Century solutions to the problems of supporting and encouraging the creators, performers and institutions of the performing arts. I want to do everything I can to help achieve such objectives. In short, it is my conviction that Lincoln Center can and must be a dynamic constructive force." Amen.

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Saddest theatre news of the month is the verification of the rumor that the recently refurbished Hudson Theatre has been sold by NBC for over $1 million to be demolished and replaced by a garage. The TV company explains in the face of deserved criticism that no theatre buyer could be found. Though David Cogan, who recently bought the Biltmore, claims he has been trying to contact NBC, the firm states that no theatrical buyer was remotely competitive . The fact that the name of the proposed buyer is still undisclosed is interesting. It is assumed that the new owner expects would-be patrons to be theatre-goers attending other playhouses not yet torn down to make garages. Why cannot he not consider constructing a combination new theatre - parking garage and earn the eternal gratitude of all theatre-goers?

OUTER BROADWAY THEATRE LETTER

College Theatre

Prof. George Izenour to give course on theatre engineering this term at Yale Univ, School of Drama ...Arthur Lithgow will tour NJ colleges and schools giving lectures, readings, demonstrations in behalf of McCarter Theatre, Princeton, NJ.

McCarter Theatre, Princeton, NJ, to open season Oct 5 with NY Off Broadway production of Hedda Gabler starring Signe Hasso. The Importance of Being Oscar one man show with Michael MacLiammoir to be presented Oct 9. Resident company to open season Oct 14 with Saint Joan, to be followed by Androcles and the Lion, Our Town and Three Plays by Thornton Wilder. Theatre is independent of Princeton Univ, but receives a grant from it.

New Playhouses

Mineola Theatre, a former movie house in Mineola, NY, to be converted into 1200 seat legit playhouse by Louis Simon and Frank Calderone, aiming at pre- Broadway tryouts and touring companies. First booking is Taste of Honey Nov 8... Rivoli Theatre, Houston, Texas, to be converted from film to drama by Jerry Gray. First winter production will be Auntie Mame Oct 18

Community Theatres

Latest gimmick in music - tent financing is to incorporate as a community, county, state project to eliminate taxes and to give gain only to the smart impressarios, warns Coleman, Mirror.

Golem! a new play by Stephan Lackner to be presented by Des Moines, Iowa, Community Playhouse Dec 1-16. Play won group's first playwriting contest prize of $375 plus two week grant in resid - ency for author during its production. Program has been extended for 1961-62 season.

Award Dept: Town Theatre, Columbia, S. C., to present $1000 prize and production for best play. John Gassner, Delbert Mann judges. ...Des Plaines, Ill, Theatre Guild, P O Box 84 offering $300 prize and possible production...Webster Groves, Mo, Original One Act Play Contest presents $50 first prize.

Winter Repertory

Pittsburgh, Pa, Playhouse to open season Sept 23 with Big Fish, Little Fish...Angna Enters to be artist-in-residence- this year at Dallas, Tex, Theatre Center.

Shakespeare

Macbeth student matinees at Stratford, Conn, opened 46 performance season with Margaret Phillips, Franklin Cover...San Diego, Cal, Festival season extended for another week to Sept 17.

Summer Playhouses

Expansion plans of Ben Segal and Bob Hall, Oakdale, Conn, Musical Theatre for next season include: permanent theatre buildings at Wallingford, Conn, opening of tent operations at Laurel, Md, San Francisco, Calif. Plus co-partnership with Eddie Albert for a 2500 tent in Hawaii.

TV Notes

"Playwright at Work" ten half hour taped interviews and scenes with new playwrights and new directors will start first series Nov 5 on educational TV stations in Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Houston, Pittsburgh, New Orleans, Durham.

Road Shows

Blood Sweat and Stanley Poole Philadelphia tryout delayed opening from Sept 11 to Sept 16 due to hot weather opening night ...A Thurber Carnival tour with Arthur Treacher and Imogene Coca starts Sept 22 in Norfolk...Bye Bye Birdie trek starts Oct 25 in Richmond, Va.

Theatre Outlook troupe of England's Liverpool Repertory Co opens 15 week US tour Sept 21 at Hamlet St Theatre, Pittsburgh, Pa. Coriolanus, The School for Scandal, and Four Men a new play by Andre Davis will be done in repertory. Eric Salmon, director, was a resident teacher-observer at Univ of Wisconsin, Madison, last year. Stops include Univ of Wisc, Lawrence College, Appleton, Wisc, Southern Ill. Univ, Ohio Weselyan Univ and Lisner Auditorium, Washington. D. C.

US Repertory

NY Repertory Co concluded two month Latin American tour in Mexico City. Some reviewers complained that many strong lines were distorted in huge Fine Arts Palace auditorium. None were shocked by the plays presented by Actors Studio members.

London

The Fantasticks opened at Apollo to mixed reviews. Approval of English cast directed by Word Baker and for charm of show itself, but with complaints that theatre was too big for tiny production... Duchess Theatre, 424 seats, sold to producer Peter Saunders... Peter Cook, Beyond the Fringe, opened " The Establishment" night club which will feature two shows nightly. Marx Bros and Valentino films will be shown in the afternoons.

Germany

Three Hamburg and one Frankfurt theatres have cancelled scheduled Brecht productions ... Lotte Lenya to appear on Munich TV production of Kurt Weill's Seven Deadly Sins.

Current Road Tours

Blood, Sweat and Stanley Poole- Locust-Philadelphia 9/16.

The Caretaker- Wilbur, Boston 9/18

A Cook for Mr. General- Shubert, New Haven 9/20

Do You Know the Milky Way- Cass, Detroit 9/20

High Fidelity- Walnut 9/14

How to Succeed- Shubert Philadelphia-9/4

Kean- Shubert, Boston 9/16

Kwamina- O Keefe, Toronto 9/4

Let It Ride- Erlanger, Philadelphia 9/7

Milk & Honey- Colonial- Boston 9/5

Sail Away- Forrest, Philadelphia 9/5

My Fair Lady- KRNT, Des-Moines 9/13

The Miracle Worker-Nixon Pittsburgh 9/18.

"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week." CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.